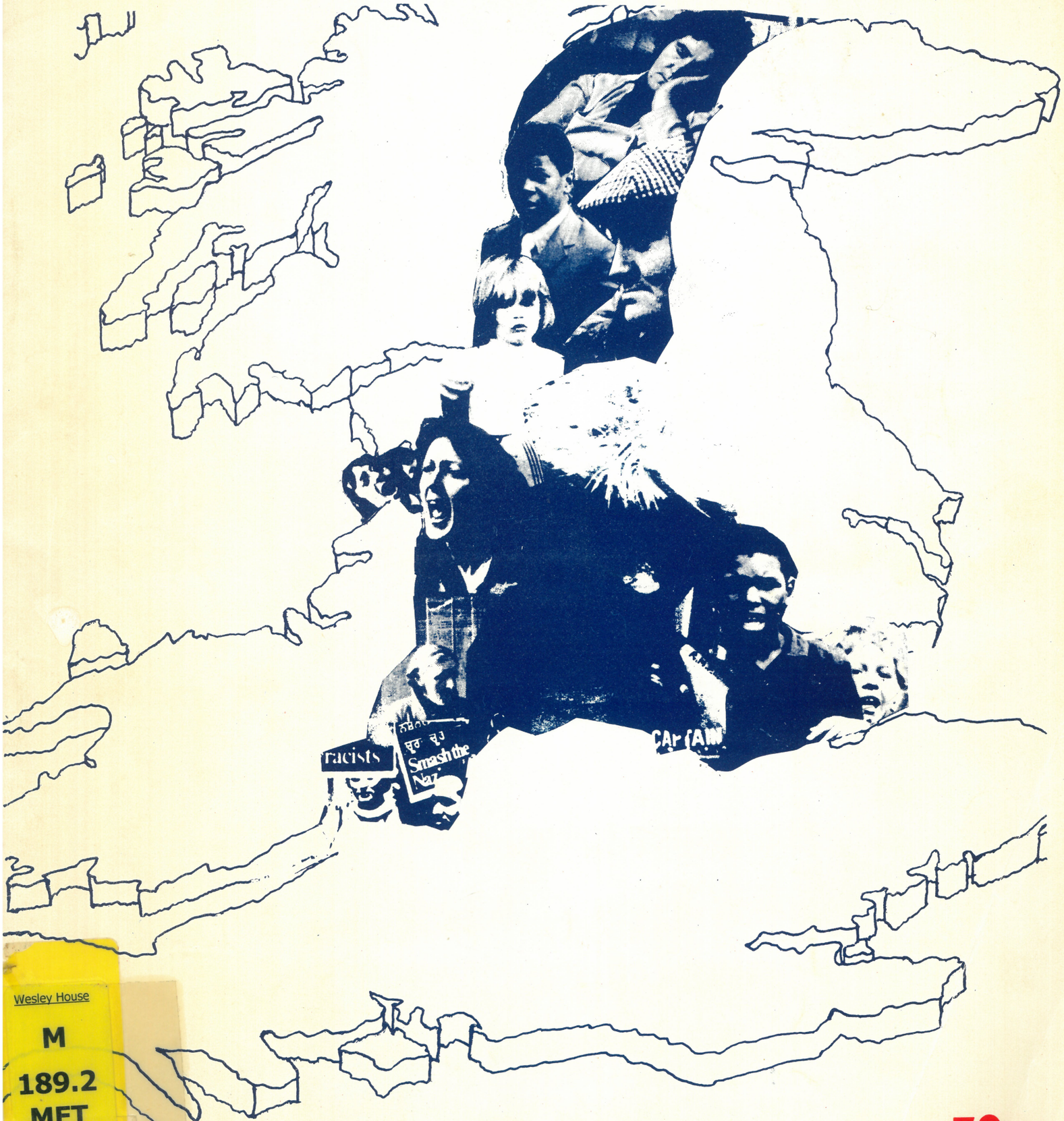
TWO NATIONS ONE GOSPEL ?



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Two Nations One Gospel ?

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HOME MISSION
THE METHODIST CHURCH
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URBAN THEOLOGY UNIT

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Preface

A CALL TO HOME MISSION

In July 1980 the Methodist Conference unanimously accepted a Call to Home Mission, moved by Dr. John Vincent and Mr. Roy Crowder. The Call stated:

Conscious of the growing divisions of British Society today, and of the urgent need for Christian Mission to the Nation in the whole of its life, the Conference calls on the Church

1 To discover and stand beside the Poor, as a prime duty of Christian discipleship;
2 To develop ways of tackling the causes of social inequality and injustice;
3 To sustain and put new resources at the disposal of missions, churches and communities committed to those areas of our society where its divisions are most painfully felt;
4 To examine new models for Christian Mission in areas of need, both in Britain and overseas.

The Conference instructed the Division of Home Mission to convene a widely-based Working Party to develop proposals to implement this Call, and to Report to the Conference of 1981.

As a result, the Inner City Committee of the Division of Home Mission at its Meeting of 10 December 1980 appointed a Group which would plan a Campaign, to be launched at the Methodist Conference of 1981. It will be called the . . .

TWO NATIONS - ONE GOSPEL? CAMPAIGN

To expose the divisions of society today.
To arouse the Christian conscience about poverty and deprivation.
To study the Gospel as good news to the poor.
To hold up places and activity which represent Christ's mission among the poor.
To motivate the whole Church to share in the Church's mission among the needy in the cities.

The Campaign will be launched at the Methodist Conference in Norwich in July 1981. The principle methods to be used are:

1) This Workbook, for use in local churches, for group study and action.
2) A Campaign, with Public Meetings, Slogans, Demonstrations, to be arranged through District Home Mission Committees
3) One-Day Conferences, offering Speakers at Conferences, Meth Socs, Colleges etc.

PLANNING GROUP

The Group appointed to produce the Workbook and plan the Campaign was:
Rev. Jeffrey Harris (Methodist Home Mission Division), Rev. Donald Pickard (Notting Hill Team Ministry), Rev. Garth Rogers (Manchester and Salford Methodist Mission), Rev. Dr. John Vincent (Sheffield Inner City Ecumenical Mission), Dr. Robin Ward (Aston University Department of Sociology), and Mrs. Judith Watkins (Manchester and Salford Methodist Mission). Editorial work was done by Mr. Richard Levitt, Dr. John Vincent and Mr. Mark Woodhead at the Urban Theology Unit.

We would like to invite people all over the country, whether Methodists or not, to join us in our study and also to share in the Campaign. Please communicate with any of the Planning Group, or with one of the following:

Rev. Jeffrey Harris, Inner City Committee, Home Mission Division, 1, Central Buildings, London SW1H 9NH.

Rev. Dr. John Vincent, Two Nations Campaign, Urban Theology Unit, 210, Abbeyfield Road, Sheffield, S4 7AZ.

JOHN J. VINCENT

June, 1981.

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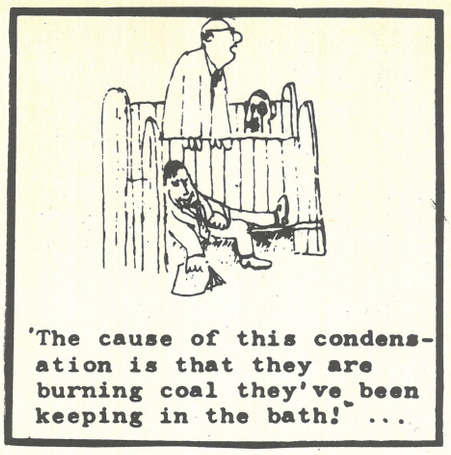
Introduction



TWO NATIONS

"I was told that the privileged and the people formed two nations"

Disraeli's accusation that there were in Britain "Two Nations" has been repeated at various times since the 1880s, when he first made it.

The 1980s seems to be a time when Britain is becoming "two nations".

This introductory chapter gives some cameos and some lines for thought. After this chapter, we concentrate on the way the divisions in Britain affect the nation as a whole, and particular groups of people.

A HUMAN STORY

After 8 years of struggling one young mum has the income and housekeeping expenses listed below:

INCOME	(Weekly)	EXPENSES	(Weekly)
Supplementary Benefit	£38.00	Rent	£9.86
Child Benefit	12.50	Electricity	3.40
		Gas	2.42
		Clothing Club for kids and replacing bedding (stolen)	2.00
		Mail Order (gas fire, sewing machine, clothes, Xmas)	5.00
		Food	15.00
		Launderette	1.50
		Savings Club (carpet)	5.00
		Papers, material, bus	1.00
		Television	2.50
		Insurance	1.00
		Telephone	3.15
	£50.50	[Net loss £1.33]	£51.83

Net Loss means less will be spent on food; it's the easiest thing to do without and, after 8 years' experience, the easiest expense to control.

She cannot get work, has two children, one at school and the baby; she has no holiday, has not had a night out in years, only goes to another city if her relatives send the fare, and can afford only one bus trip into town fortnightly. Her relatives put the 'phone in and she will soon have to have it out because it's an expense she can't afford, but that will cut her off from them. She is managing well and the social workers are happy with her progress, including her willpower, regular worship, good home and her hatred of hypocrisy. How could the church respond in words and actions that would reach the roots of her circumstances?

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "THE POOR"?

Before the "Good News" more searching questions:
What do we mean when we use the phrase "the poor"?
Do words such as "poverty", "deprivation", and "underprivilege", all of them abstractions, convey adequately the real conditions in which poor people live? - or convey adequately the root causes of their circumstances?

According to Peter Townsend, people are "poor", "when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong . . . and are in effect excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities". That is Peter Townsend's definition of poverty. He is saying, in effect, that "people's needs, even for food are conditioned by the society to which they belong." (From *Poverty in the United Kingdom - A Survey of Household Resources and Standards of Living*, Peter Townsend, Penguin, 1979: a volume used throughout this book.)

WHAT DO WE DO?

Definitions, however, are not enough. Actions are necessary. To get beyond definitions by finding appropriate actions, we need to ask basic, searching questions, e.g.:

In our churches and in our everyday lives, to what extent do we place barriers between ourselves and the poor?

How do the institutions of British society create and perpetuate poverty?

Who benefits from the perpetuation of poverty?

Who sets the standards by which some people measure relative deprivation?

Sometimes people, including some Christians, divide the poor into two groups: the deserving and the undeserving of help. What are the motives for making such a distinction?

THE BIBLE'S BIAS

How, if at all, can the Biblical evidence of "God's ways" be an impulse to living out the Gospel today?

1) **Read Amos 6: 4-6**
Luke 12: 16-21

In the Bible, the poor are often put on the side of God, and the rich with the Devil. In what sense are today's poor 'blessed of God' and the rich 'cursed'?

2) **Read Deut. 15: 4-11**

These verses describe some of the provisions made by a society without a welfare state to ensure that those who did not live comfortably from the proceeds of their work could make a living through charity. If the Israelites followed God's commands, they would get rid of poverty.

We live in a society today in which the Government and Transnational Corporations control most of the resources. Where lies the responsibility for relieving poverty now and how should it be done? What part should Christians play in this?

3) **Read Luke 16: 19-25**

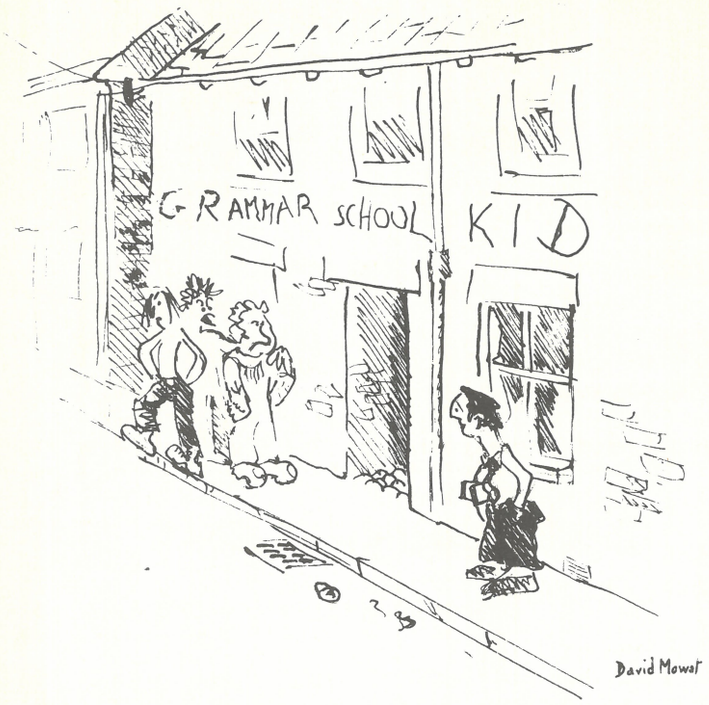
The Government could do much more to ensure an adequate standard of living for all people if it could use all the income it is due from income tax. How would you encourage people and firms to stop concealing income in their tax returns on such a gigantic scale?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Think over and discuss these statements, made by various people during our preparatory meetings:

1. Deprivation in inner city areas, rural areas and council housing estates has increased by 50% in the last 5 years.
2. The God of the Bible is biased in favour of the poor.
3. We have been closing churches in poor areas for 25 years.
4. The poor find it hard to live with us.
5. Equality and justice are demanded by God.
6. We have contributed to the growth of inequality and injustice by using Christianity as a "social escalator".
7. The church must become a work provider.
8. Churches are in peril of completely disappearing.
9. Churches that survive, in areas where divisions are most painfully felt, can teach us so much.
10. The whole church needs to know how the poor churches live.
11. We need a new campaign to put our best people at the disposal of the poorest and least powerful; the rich at the disposal of the poor.
12. We recognise that we do not know how to obey God's call to home mission.

1 Divided Britain



STORY

Joe Robinson is a man of the 1980s. His parents met whilst serving in the Forces in World War II. They married and set up house in Bethnal Green, near the street where Joe's mother had been brought up, and where she worked until called up in the Forces.

His father had always lived in the North, working in a Sheffield steelworks until he joined the Army. During the war he had been a truck driver, and so found a job with London Transport. Their home was an old terraced house, slightly damaged in the air raids, but easily repaired. Joe was their first child, born in 1946.

Joe was a bright child, alert and intelligent. He didn't relate easily to the other children in the street. He got a free place at a Grammar School. In time he passed his A Levels and went to Manchester to study engineering at the Institute of Science and Technology, now part of Manchester University.

In 1967 he left University. They were the days of the great technological revolution, when the prospect was held out of a standard of living that would double in fifteen years. He went to work in an industry which was central to that great dream, The British Steel Corporation. He was appointed as a trainee manager at British Steel, Corby. Whilst at Manchester, he had met a nurse, training at the Manchester Royal Infirmary. They married, then they set up house in Kettering, so that he didn't live amongst the people who worked for him.

As an engineer he quickly improved his own house, being a natural expert in D.I.Y. Life was good for Joe Robinson - a good job, good prospects, a happy home and in time children, a son and a daughter. His wife Margaret had become a church member through her links as a nurse with the Manchester and Salford Mission. When the children were born, they were baptised in the Methodist Church. Margaret went with them regularly to Family Church, and Joe went with them every few weeks as well.

In 1980, Joe Robinson's world began to fall apart. The cloud of recession gathered; the demand for steel decreased. British Steel was in trouble. As part of their survival plan, Joe Robinson's section was closed. No transfers were possible. Early in 1981, Joe Robinson was made redundant - a steel engineer, aged 34, buying his home on a mortgage. At first he wasn't too concerned. He applied for a number of jobs without success. He wondered what the prospects were in London - where unemployment is lower, and there is still a feeling of prosperity. He decided to go and see. He left his wife and children, and took a train from Kettering to London St. Pancras. He would go and visit his parents, and look around for jobs.

From the next chapter, Joe takes up the story in his own words.

FACTS AND FIGURES

a) Areas and Conditions

In Northern Ireland, Clydeside, Tyne and Wear, and Liverpool, the unemployment rate is officially estimated to be over 10%. In Wales and Northern England it is over 9%. In Greater London, the South East and East Anglia it is below 5% - though in parts of inner London it exceeds 10%. These are official estimates, and they may be underestimates, due to constant change in the figures, and due to manipulation of the statistics to keep the figures low.

63% of dwellings in the South West are owner-occupied and 22% are local authority houses; in Scotland, 35% of householders own their own homes: 41% of people in the North and 31% in London live in Council houses.

b) Finance

In 1979, the average weekly earnings of manual workers was £91 for men and £55.20 for women. The average weekly earnings of non-manual workers was £110 for men and £66 for women. However, there are about two and a half million people registered unemployed in Britain in 1981. Their benefit is one third of the average earnings - increased to one half when earnings related benefit or supplementary benefit is taken into account. The basic unemployment benefit for a married couple in April 1981 was £33.40 per week. The retirement pension for a married couple at the same date was £43.45 per week. The total household income of over one household in five in Britain in 1979 was under £50 per week. The basic unemployment benefit for a single person in April 1981 was £20.65 per week.

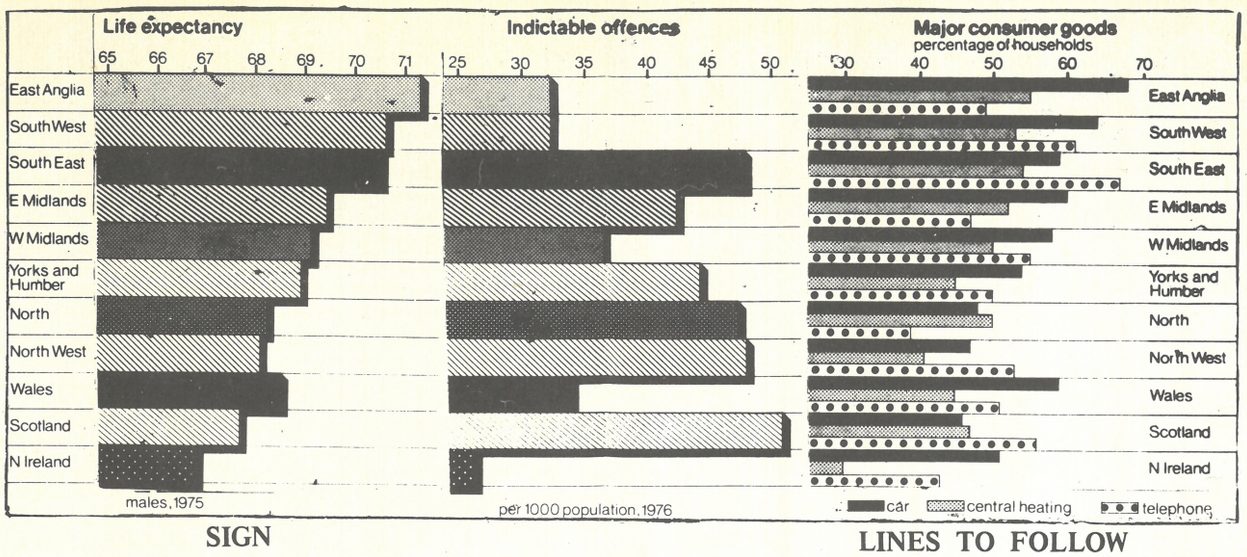
c) Environment

There are 19.8 million households in Great Britain. 7.5 million of these are in the Metropolitan Counties. Some 2.5 million households are in the inner city areas of the Metropolitan Counties, i.e. 1 in 8 of all households in Great Britain. Their number is, of course, increased considerably when other cities, such as Nottingham, Bristol, Leicester, and Derby, are taken into account. 42% of all households do not have a car.

d) Differentials

In our society there are large differentials in income, wealth, and power between different sections of the population. We may think that such differentials are declining but, in fact, inequalities of pay, in Britain, were fractionally greater in 1980 than in 1886. Over the last two or three years, in particular, the gap has been increasing. The poorer manual workers have been amongst those hardest hit by the recession, and the tax burden on the poorest has increased, while the more highly paid have enjoyed large cuts in income tax. The poor have also lost out through cuts in expenditure on housing, unemployment benefit, child benefit, and supplementary benefits.

The government could do much more to reduce inequalities in income if it was able to spend all the taxes it was entitled to receive. Official estimates of the amount of undeclared income are £12,000,000,000 a year, and estimates of the tax unpaid each year by firms and individuals range between £2,000,000,000 and £3,500,000,000. While there is a great deal of public concern to stop social security abuse, which probably amounts to some tens of millions a year, there is little pressure on the Government to take measures to track down those evading the payment of tax.



SIGN LINES TO FOLLOW

The World Service and Mission Committee was meeting in a Methodist church in a suburb of London. The members of the committee were going through the agenda nicely. The minutes were confirmed; the committee considered the amount raised for the mission and charitable purposes of Methodism, and the arrangements made for Sunday services and meetings; they had prepared the social responsibility schedule for the church council; they still had various appointments to make, but did not think that would take long. Item four on the agenda is standard:-
"Consideration of matters of national and international concern which should be brought to the attention of the members of the church."

One of the members of that particular committee had come to London a few years previously. Most of his life had been spent on Wearside in County Durham. Both his and his wife's parents still live in County Durham - but it is now called Tyne and Wear. The committee member had recently been 'up North' to visit them, and was appalled by the growing unemployment. Coal mines, which he once knew, had ceased production; the shipbuilding and repair yards had few orders; and workers, many of them highly skilled, had lost their jobs. Other factories were on short time. Worst of all, those leaving school had almost no hope of a job. No-one wanted apprentices or clerks or typists. No-one was recruiting. The sense of fatalism and despair had affected him deeply.

"Would members of the church open their homes to young people from the churches in the North East, so that the young people could come to good homes, to see if there were any vacancies which they could fill?," he asked. Parents would be reassured if they knew their children had good homes in which to live. Might the scheme not be organised on a wider basis by one of the Divisions?

The committee found that it had indeed "a matter of national concern which should be brought to the attention of the church members." The Committee is now raising this matter in the church, and the end of the story is not yet!

1) What to Do

a) Try to find out about poverty in your area. This may mean contacting a local church's Housing Association, or Shelter, or Save the Children Fund, or the Child Poverty Action Group, or the Council for Voluntary Service. Such organisations may be able to provide local information, or someone to speak about poverty.

b) If there are unemployed people in your church, try to get them to talk to you about the experience of unemployment.

c) Contact a person ministering in one of the inner city churches in your region, to get information on poverty and suggestions as to how churches and Christians might combat poverty.

d) What would you do if you were unemployed - assuming that you are not unemployed - ? Find out what social security benefits you would get. What would you do about your mortgage and hire purchase commitments? How do those on low incomes manage when they are out of work?

2) What to Study

Bible

Read and discuss 1 Kings 21 (Naboth's Vineyard)

In urban areas, decisions to end businesses may be taken on financial grounds, without considering very much the interests of workers who may have given years of service to the firm. Does the slogan "business is business" justify everything which is done in the business world?

Books

Inner City Issues - R B. Crowder and J.J. Vincent (Liverpool Inst. Soc-Rel. Studies, 1980. Available from UTU).

Built as a City - David Sheppard (Paperback, Hodder & Stoughton, 1974).

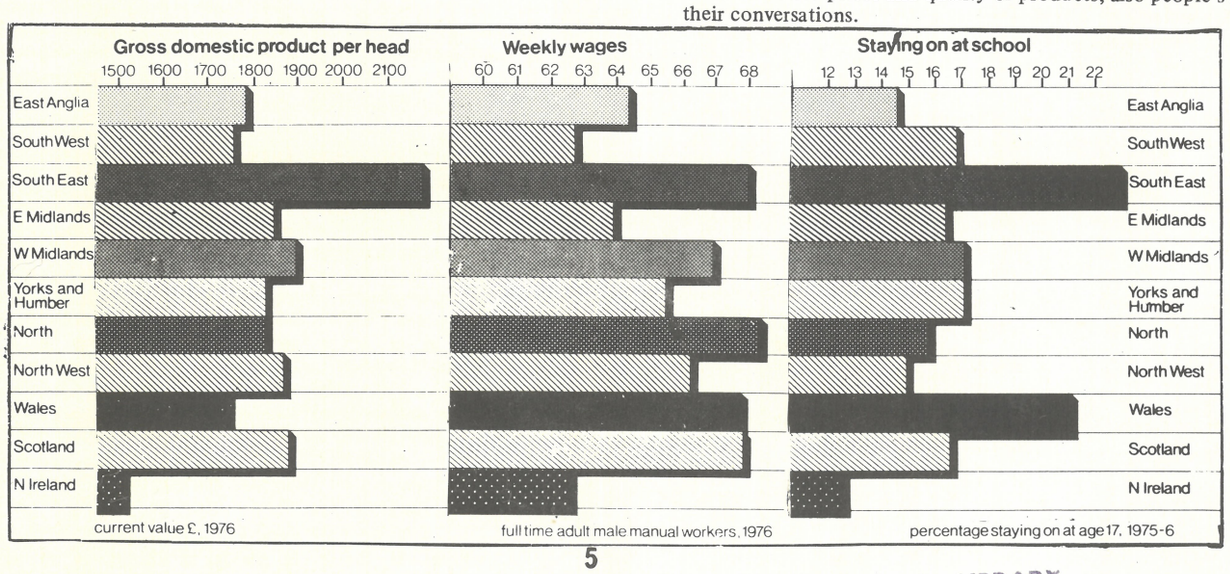
Social Trends - Annual Publication of H.M.S.O. (available from local, representing bookshop).

Wealth Report - Counter Information Services, Booklet (available from 9, Poland Street, London, W1 - price 85p)

3) What to Do Next

a) Make contact with a study group in a different type of area (as different as possible) and arrange a weekend exchange for some members. Exchanging members should report back to their own group and to the other group.

b) Take a shopping trip, via public transport, into a very different type of area. Notice prices and quality of products, also people's looks and their conversations.



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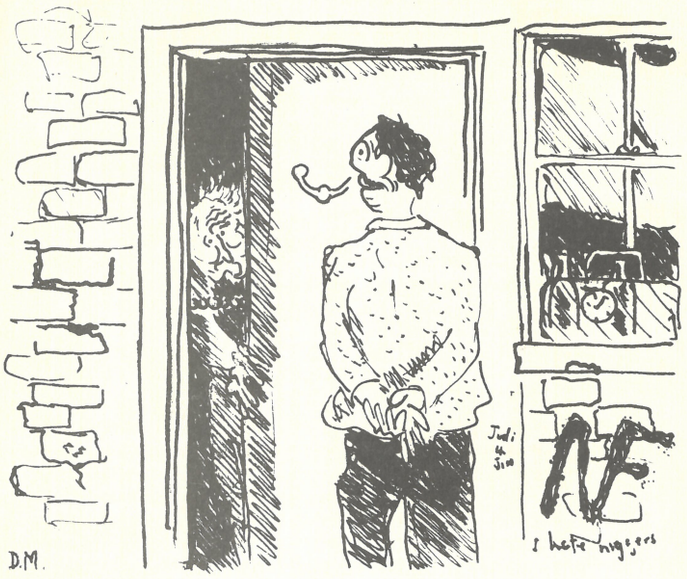
2 Old People



STORY

I felt the clutch of fear in my stomach as I got off the 'bus. I should have made the journey before. I should have kept in touch. "Silly", I said, bracing myself, "to be feeling so like a child again". I had been too busy to visit - the house, the garden, the family, my football - they don't realise how much time maintaining and improving a house takes, and they've not a clue about gardens, let alone the demands of a responsible, modern job.

I braced myself. I rattled at the knocker. The door opened a chain's length, and an old lady's wrinkled face appeared in the slit. An old lady's - Gosh, it was my mother. They'd mentioned that she hadn't been too well, but their letters were brief and infrequent. Writing wasn't exactly their strong point, and the level of my education had always frightened them. "Son", she exclaimed after a brief and incredulous stare, and she lifted the chain off, flung the door open, and I was inside - back home, and there was dad in his armchair prodding away at the fire and losing the ash off his fag end.

As I lay in the lumpy old bed in the back room that night, I thought how dingy the place was. They'd done their best with it but it was old and damp, and the roof leaked. The kitchen (scullery they still called it) was like something out of the ark, and the outside loo (the lav.) - well, I ask you! They said that they kept getting rats and mice from the empty houses at the back, and they'd got cockroaches and snails with the damp. You'd have thought they'd have been glad a Compulsory Purchase Order had been slapped on the place. But they were only worried about the move, not knowing where they would be moved to, who their neighbours would be, and how near it would be to the shops. Surely anywhere would be better than this outmoded hovel! And the neighbours could hardly be worse than that weak woman with the wild hoard next door. Dad says one of the kids was in care, and they all ought to be. She leaves them on their own every night while she goes to bingo or the pub, and they have their friends in and make one hell of a row. Five times they have been up on the roof, dare-devilling and pinching lead.

The blare of reggae music from the church opposite interrupted my thoughts. My mother had stopped going to church because it was run by blacks now. My father had never had anything to do with it. Thank God, the music stopped. But the moment of quiet suddenly burst with a babble of exuberant West Indian Creole. What noisy bastards they are! No wonder the National Front's active in this area!

My mother has diabetes now, and angina, and dad has started to become childish. He's told her she ought to see about getting a home help, but she's very offended at the idea. Perhaps he'll try to bring the matter up again in the morning. She has a lot of extra washing now, too, because dad is sometimes incontinent, and the washing makes the house damper than ever. I am sure my bedding feels damp - I'll probably get the most awful cold to take back to Kettering with me.

FACTS AND FIGURES

a) Prospects

The number of 'o.a.p.'s in the U.K. has increased in this century from 3 to 9 million, which is 16% of the population, and this increase will continue. 20% of these live in poverty, and 44% are on the verge of poverty. The elderly poor comprise 36% of the poor in the U.K.

When moving into old age, people tend to separate into two groups. One group depends almost entirely for money on the resources made available by the state, through the social security system. They dread retirement. The other group, those with higher occupational status, have more opportunity to save, and to acquire property and possessions; and they have occupational and wage-related pensions. They anticipate a comfortable and even early retirement.

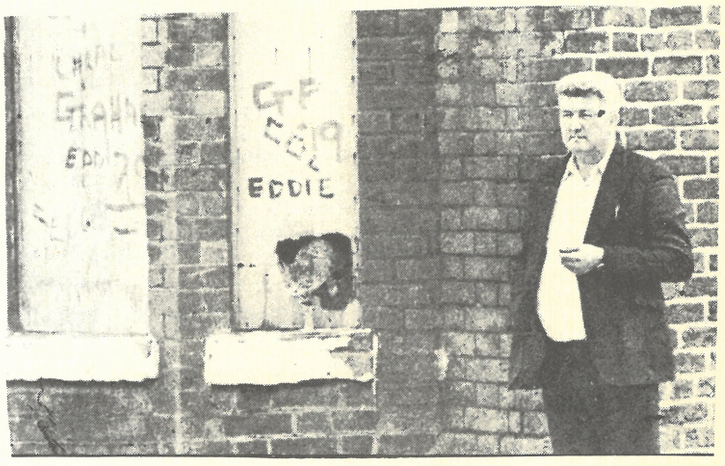
The D.H.S.S., and the local authority social services, have been regarded traditionally as agencies which modify the inequalities. But the gap between rich and poor old people grows, because

a) The statutory benefits are not high enough.
b) Many 'o.a.p.'s do not claim all their entitlements.

b) Pensions

Even after the efforts in 1966 to make the process of claiming benefit easier and more acceptable, a survey in 1974 showed that 560,000 pensioners (excluding wives and dependants) who were eligible for supplementary pension (i.e., 24% of those eligible for it) were not receiving it. In total, £60 million due to the old in the form of Supplementary Pensions was not claimed.

Townsend found that very many people are still ignorant (and actually misinformed) about Supplementary Pensions and other welfare benefits and services; he also found that roughly one third of recipients felt uncomfortable about receiving Supplementary Pension. He found, too, that many who begin to make inquiries of the D.H.S.S. give up in despair before obtaining help, and he quotes a lengthy correspondence he had with Salford D.H.S.S., which lasted eight months and never came to a satisfactory conclusion.



c) Health

The health of old people is generally worst in poor areas, notably inner city areas. The old frequently live in the poorest quality housing and 72% of them live with less heat that the government says is necessary to prevent hypothermia. Even with rehousing, the old are prone to suffer ill-health as a result of forcible relocation of residence, through 'tower block neurosis' or 'housing estate blues'. Frequently, doctors have left these areas for more congenial practices.

d) Community-based health services

The population decline in inner city areas creates a growing residual population of isolated old people.

A recent Age Concern survey shows old people in cities having problems with stairs, lacking inside toilets and hot water, being ignorant of heating allowances, finding it difficult to get to surgeries, (with no-one to help to get prescriptions), with few local chemists (who often do not have what is prescribed), without telephones, and with no means of raising help when ill. Of those interviewed, 6 in 10, on average, said that they did not have at least one hot meal per day, and one who did confided her fears concerning the person who brought it:

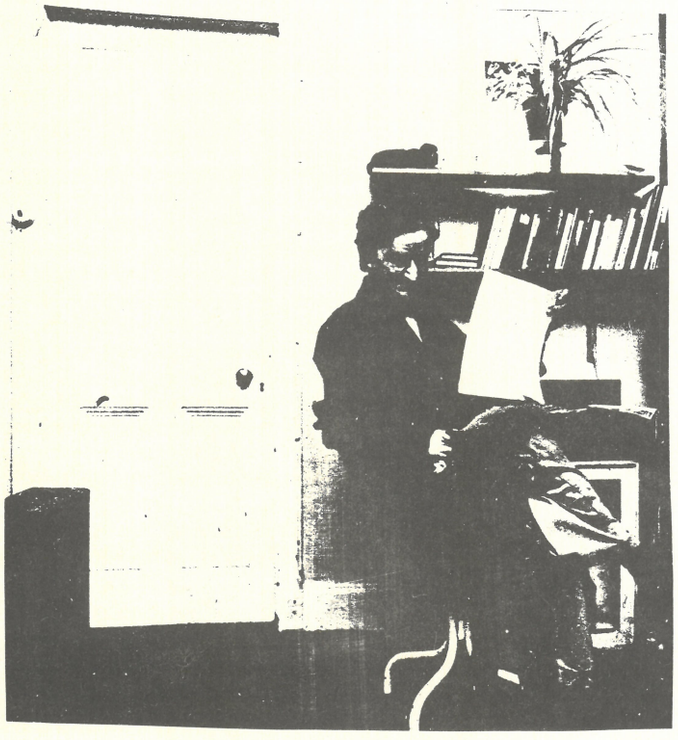
> "The officer of health is trying to get repairs done to my flat. The walls are running with water when it rains and the floor boards are giving way in the passage and elsewhere. I have been trying to get something done for months but the landlord ignores my letters. I'm afraid of an accident to anyone coming in, especially to the meals-on-wheels girls."

SIGN

The 1971 Census figures clearly show that the Rusholme area of inner city Manchester has a high proportion of old people. In light of this, people of Platt Lane Methodist Church started two complementary care schemes.

LINK is an ecumenical venture which started with 80 volunteers committed to regular visiting and trained in what to look for. It now also has 74 workers, on a scheme organised under the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP), who together with their 28 supervisors are based in an old scout hut, and do painting and decorating for the old, the ill and single parents. They also shop for the old, collect pensions, and are available to provide transport, where hospitals etc. are inaccessible, or when people are too decrepit for public transport. They run a furniture store for single parents, and babysit when necessary. Some of the YOP workers are on Probation, some are from the N.C.H., and an estimated 40% are illiterate when they join. Literacy classes are provided, many go on to exams, colleges, and people-orientated jobs.

LINK has good relations with the statutory bodies, through its advice sessions manned by welfare rights officer and C.A.B. volunteers. Many fall through the statutory nets, however. One old lady they found with ulcerated legs on the verge of gangrene, sitting up to her gas cooker to keep warm, in a house the Council believed to be empty and had once sent workmen to board up.



THE DAY CENTRE started 18 months ago on Inner City money, and is based in the church itself. After the Daily Office, people begin to arrive to chat, read the paper, listen to the radio, seek advice. About 80 have lunch at the Centre. Three vanloads of meals are taken out. Missing members are visited. Counselling and practical help with moving and with settling in are given when members are rehoused.

The spin-off for the church is that the Centre's minibus is available for transporting to its Services and Sisterhood; and its premises are being turned into a "Home."

LINES TO FOLLOW

1) What to Do

a) Get the current literature on Supplementary Benefits (including single payments - formerly exceptional needs payments) and Family Income Supplement. Prepare budgets for people depending on these benefits, especially old people on Supplementary Pension. Try to 'pick holes' in one another's budgets, seeing what important things are missed out and bearing in mind the need to replace clothing, bedding, furniture and so on periodically.

b) Ask if you can be shown round an old people's home, or a geriatric ward of any hospital.

c) Spend half an hour in the public waiting room of a D.H.S.S. office.

2) What to Study

Bible

1 Long life in the Old Testament is seen as a blessing. Long life is becoming increasingly common in the Northern Hemisphere but is comparatively rare in the 'Third World'. Should we, and do we, regard old age as a luxury, a blessing, or a curse? Look up Psalms 91: 16 and Proverbs 9: 11.

2 Genesis 27: 1-4; Have the old anything to 'bless' the young with today?

3 Mark 12: 41-44; Surely this lonely old woman should have been the recipient of alms, not the giver. What insights into programmes of care for the elderly can you get from this story?

Books

The Family Life of Old People; an Inquiry in East London, Peter Townsend (R.K.P., 1957; Pelican 1970).

Retiring to the Seaside, V. Karn (1977, R.K.P.).

The Care of the Elderly in the Community, Idris Williams (1979).

Literature from Age Concern on schemes of community care for the elderly, and book by Eira M. Davies, Let's get Moving.

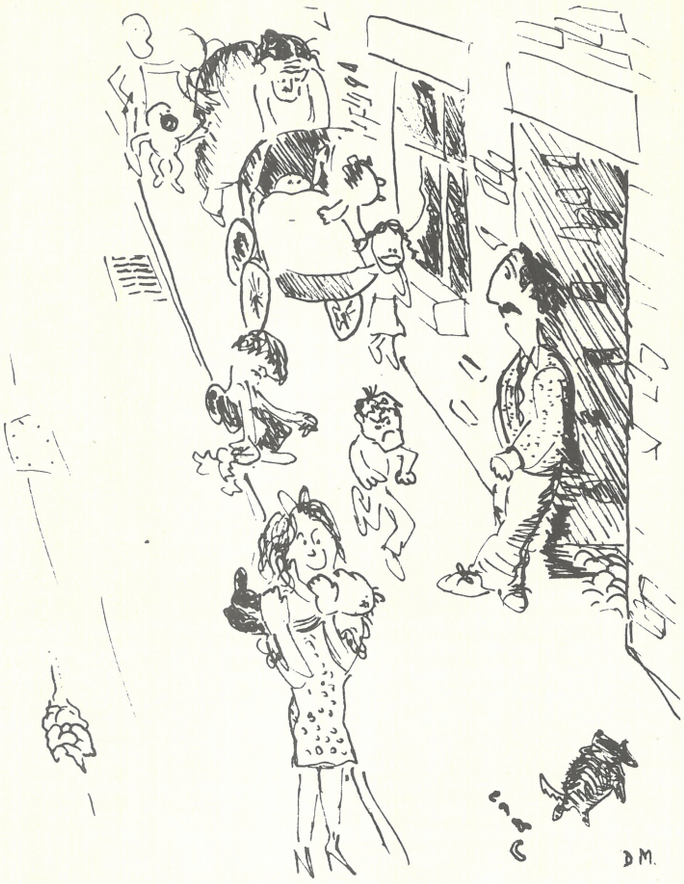
3) What to Do Next

1 Adopt a lonely old person as 'uncle' or 'aunt'.

2 Work out a scheme to bring greater stimulus to people in a neighbouring old people's home or sheltered housing block.

3 Consider starting a community care scheme for the elderly in your area. Who are in need? What do you need? How do you go about it?

3 Kids



STORY

Neighbours were always important to my parents. I remember street parties with sports for the children, and always jelly and ice cream to follow. We never seemed to need an invitation into next door, the doors were open during summer and only on the latch in winter. My father was full of stories about those days, but now - the old neighbours had gone, new people had moved in.

Next to my parents live Mrs. James and her children; there appears to be no Mr. James, and some question as to how many children. Mr. James left her after the birth of the fourth child. On visiting them, I soon learned that Mrs. James had never had much of a life her parents were divorced, her children were a constant problem to her. She had worked for a time but had lost her job due to sickness, and she now lived on social security benefits.

I have never had much sympathy with people who had children and then did not fulfil their responsibilities. There were many times when my own marriage was strained. There was, however, something about Jean James which commanded respect. She did her best, on little money, and against ever increasing problems with the children.

The eldest son, Robert, was a boy who seemed destined for trouble. At school he was a trouble-maker, smashing windows, being rude to teachers, and bullying other children. He terrorised some old people on the street, including my parents, and it was with relief that they heard one day that he had been "taken into care". They were sorry later, when they heard that he had ended up in borstal after running away from the "community home".

The two girls are doing very well at school, but the younger son seems intent on imitating his brother. I wonder if things would have turned out differently if his father had still been there. My children have always had a weekly allowance, whereas the James children have never had pocket money or the occasional trip away. I could not exist without a summer holiday; Mrs. James has not been away from home since her husband left.

I walked away from the James' house a wiser and sadder person.

FACTS AND FIGURES

a) Kids Without Both Parents

During the 1970s there has been a marked increase in the number of single-parent families with dependent children - there were about 825,000 in Britain in 1978. Over three-quarters of single parents live alone without their dependent children.

In 1978 there were 100,700 children in local authority care. Over 30% of these children were cared for by foster parents, whilst about 36% lived in "community homes", or in voluntary homes and hostels.

Oscar Lewis, in The Children of Sanchez (1965), suggested that there is a distinct sub-culture formed amongst the poorest section of society, which is self-perpetuating.

Figures can tell us little about the feelings of children in single-parent families. How do they react to questions from others about their home lives? Do they feel deprived when visiting the homes of their school friends, or when reading books which assume that both parents are present in the house?

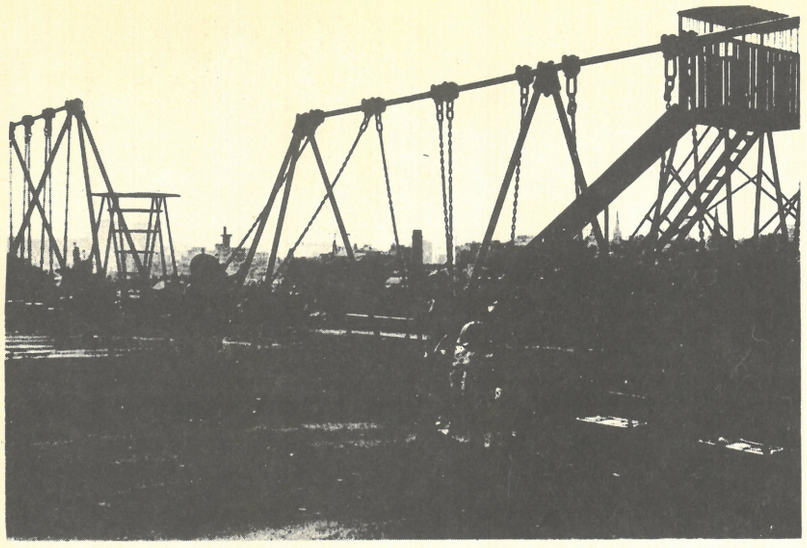
b) Hardship

Peter Townsend found that single-parent families form one of the poorest groups in the population, 49% of the families and 59% of the children being in or on the margins of poverty as defined by the state. Proportionally, fewer single-parent families than two-parent families own their own homes, fewer own televisions and other consumer durables. Fewer take holidays away from home, and fewer have evenings away from home in a normal week. 75% of children in single-parent families, aged between 3 and 14, had never had a birthday party and half of them lived in accommodation too small for the family.

c) Deprivation

Feelings are also important to examine. Single parents often feel deprived. 76% of those in Townsend's survey believed themselves to be worse off than their relatives, and 42% felt worse off then their neighbours.

Of course, many children who are not in single-parent families are also deprived; those in single-parent families just represent the difficulties in a more extreme and obvious form. In 1978, about 120,000 families with children failed to claim social security benefits, the average amount for each family being £14.50. Child poverty is concentrated mainly in certain geographical areas, including inner city areas.



SIGN

Villa Road Methodist Church is situated in the Handsworth Area of Birmingham. Its note-paper declares the building to be a "Christian Neighbourhood Centre" which includes among its activities a nursery. What follows is written by a Church member who is also the officer-in-charge of the Nursery.

Poverty and Young Mums

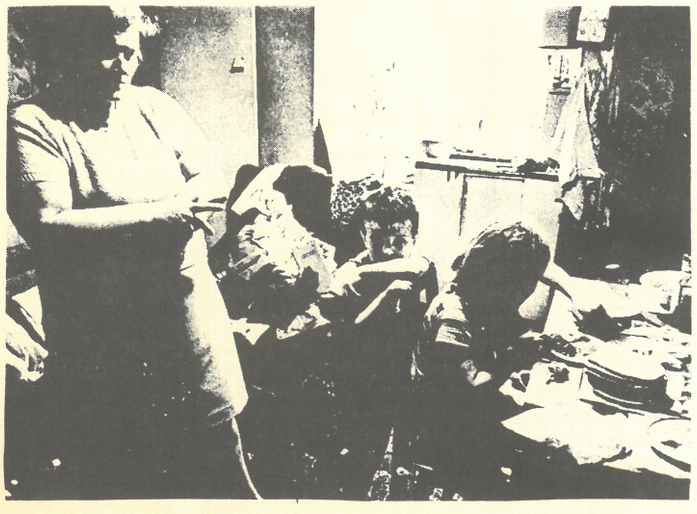
"As Officer-in-charge of a nursery catering for 2-5 year olds I have daily contact with approximately 27 mothers, most of whom are single parents and quite young (all under 25). As staff we help the mothers in whatever way we can; most of the problems they face are financial because, as we know, it is untrue to say that people live well on money received from Social Security.

One of the frequent problems is the gas supply being cut off, which means that there is little heat, if any, and the only hot meal is a cup of tea. In one case the mother was also ill, so we had to lend her the electric kettle and send her hot midday meals as well as provide a member of staff to take her to hospital on occasions.

In another case a child had to be given breakfast whenever he arrived at the nursery, and a special effort had to be made to give him substantial meals each day because we could not be sure that he would get a meal at home.

With the unemployment situation that we are facing, the old cliché that "they do not want work" is worn out and untrue. Employers are not prepared to employ people that could be called away at any time to their children; and there are no jobs to be had, anyway.

We may say that they should not become single parents with all the miseries that entails, but how do we know if it was by choice? In a society where these young people are told "you can't have a flat unless you have a baby", what choice do they have? Would Christians prefer them to have abortions?"



LINES TO FOLLOW

1) What to do?

a) Find out if there is a Gingerbread Group, or other single parent family group, in your area, and find out about its activities.

b) Examine child poverty in your area, and emotional deprivation amongst children. What seems to underlie these difficulties? What people and groups are doing anything about them? What are you going to do? Are these problems concentrated in particular parts of your town or city? If so, why do you think this might be? Are any of these problems to be found amongst people in your church?

c) Try to find ways of identifying more realistically with poor families. In what ways do their lifestyles differ from yours? In what ways would you have to adapt your lifestyles - and the lifestyles of your children - if you were in poverty? Find out why poor families often see attempts to "help" them as offensive and patronising.

2) What to Study

Bible

a Study the Letter of James. James deals with a variety of subjects, such as poverty and riches, but also, more particularly with reference to this study, it examines the relationship between belief and actions. James 2:14-17 If we are tempted to judge a family, see what is written in Chapter 2 vv.8-13. Prejudice may exist in your attitude towards such a family - study James 2:1-4 and what is said about family needs in the next few verses.

b How do the Old Testament writers deal with this issue? Look up the laws in Leviticus 19, and see how a prostitute is regarded in Joshua 2:1-21.

c Look up the attitude of Jesus in John's Gospel 7:1-11.

Books

The Child in City, Colin Ward (Penguin Books, 1978).

Urban Deprivation and the Inner City, Ed. Colin James (1979)

Other literature which may help you can be obtained from DHSS Leaflets Unit, P.O. Box 21, Stanmore, Middlesex, HA7 1AY (Especially the free booklet, FB2, Which Benefit?).

3) What to Do Next

a Are there any ways in which your family could be made more flexible and more open, so it could be more receptive to others, especially children?

b Consider the groups, such as Gingerbread and the Child Poverty Action Group, which are active in issues concerning children. Find ways in which you can get involved in their activities.

c Look for some needs of children around you which are at present unmet and neglected. Find ways in which you can begin to meet some of these needs.

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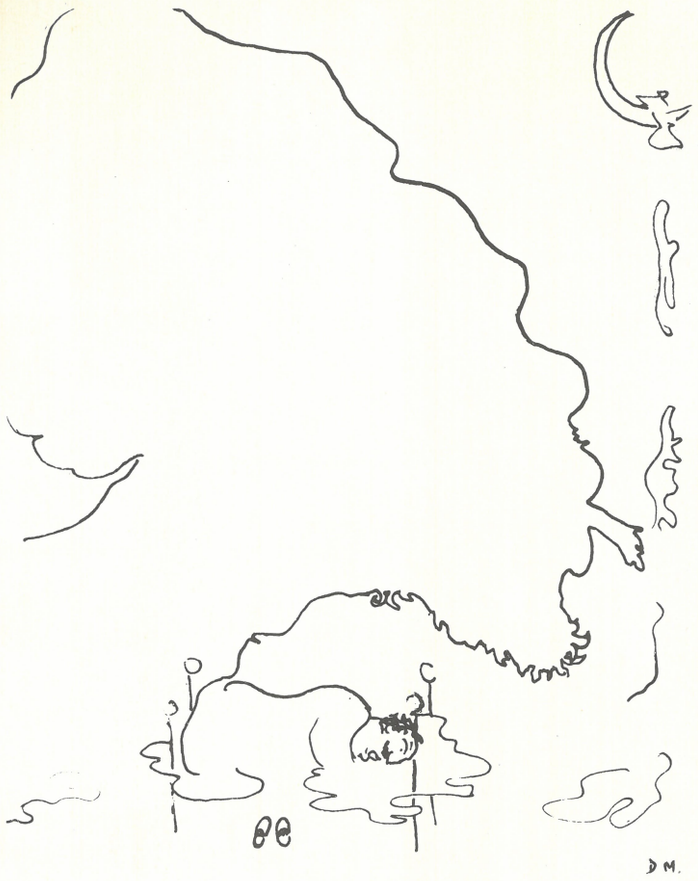
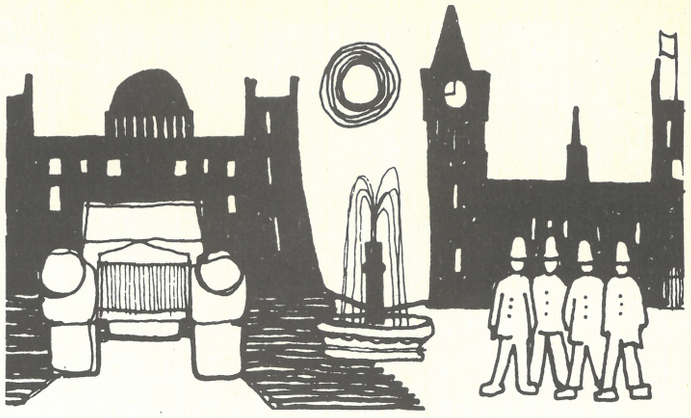
Teenagers





STORY

2.00 a.m.!

No use trying to carry on dreaming, let alone trying to sleep, while that party's going on. The sound of the drums! So loud and monotonous; they can't be enjoying it! It still goes on. Can't anyone sleep? Won't someone tell them to shut up?

Nothing else for it! Out of bed, dressing gown, over to the window. Blast! It's stuck - of course. Push . . . pull . . pull . . There goes another sash cord. See what they mean about the house falling to bits.

Where's that noise coming from? It must be that old church hall over there, with all those black kids hanging around at the door. Look at them! They've all got funny hats on, and long hair. Almost like a uniform, the red and gold and green. They're all smoking, while the records go on and on. I suppose if I shouted, no-one would hear anyway!

Funny, one of them looks like Leroy, the neighbour's boy when we all lived in Bethnal Green. I know he ran away from home, as I was talking to his parents only a month ago when we visited them. "Bad boy, that one", they said. "He never come in, even when you tell him. And when you face him with it, he give you such lip!" I couldn't really tell them that I thought it was a bit early to expect a boy of his age to be home - half past nine. But if this noisy thing over the road is anything to go by, I can see why they were worried.

I was surprised, though. Mr. and Mrs. Miller were so - respectable, I suppose, is the word. Every Sunday, morning and evening, her in that white hat, him in a good suit, with all the children lined up beside them, waiting for the minibus with that pastor driving it. They said he was a bishop. God's looked after them alright. Nice kids and all, with their Bibles in their hands. I remember in the old days - in this house - that Mum used to go to the Women's meeting and Bible class. Wonder what's happened to the Wesleyan Mission these days?

Our youth clubs were never as noisy as that going on over there. We all got good jobs. I bet those lot never did a day's work since they left school. Bet they didn't go to school anyway. And they get themselves pregnant, just so they can get on the council housing list; they smoke drugs . . .

They're not going to stop, anyway. I might as well get back to bed.

FACTS AND FIGURES

a) Political Awareness

A recent survey, conducted among young people in 72 secondary schools in England and Wales, showed that half of those interviewed believed the I.R.A. to be a Protestant organisation, and the party of nationalisation to be the Conservatives. Most had not heard of Shelter, Gingerbread, or the Child Poverty Action Group. (The Political Awareness of the School Leaver - Robert Stradling; Hansard Society, 12 Gower Street, London WC1, £1.50)

b) Crime

In 1979, 180,000 of the 5.9 million young people aged between 10 and 18 in the U.K. (i.e. 3%) were charged with offences. 17,500 boys and 1,300 girls went to residential institutions, so the majority were dealt with by fines, discharges, cautions, or supervision orders. These sanctions are applied to 90% of cases at Magistrates' Courts. The 10% who "do not respond" to this approach form the so-called "hard core" offenders, and it is on this group that "care orders", the main provision of the 1969 legislation, are placed.

The "hard core" is only a small group, some 6,000 juveniles per year. Despite all talk of "going soft", we now have more people under the age of 18 locked up than at any time since 1908. While the number of places in "community homes with education" has fallen since 1969, from 7,000 to 5,500, the number of secure places in this system has grown from 72 to 260. This is supplemented by 200 secure places in observation and assessment centres, and 66 in young treatment centres. (R. Bullock, in Christian Action, Winter 1980).

c) Aspirations

From a sample of London's school leavers:

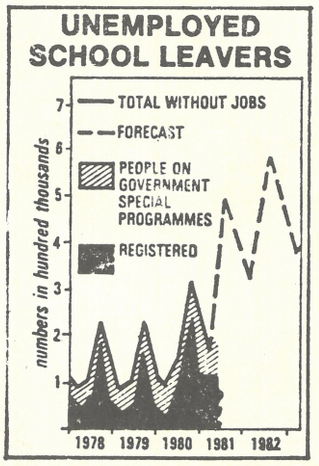
DESIRED FUTURE STATE	PROPORTION
Full-time education	24%
Apprenticeship/day release	36%
Evening classes	24%
Job with no training	13%
Hopes not known	3%

(Linda Dove, in New Society, 10.4.75)

d) Achievements

Destinations of school leavers in 1976-77:

Full-time education	14%
Employment with P/T day education	14%
Employment without P/T education	36%
Unemployed	8%
Not registered on any files	28%



SIGN

INTERCARE is a community involvement programme, run by the Newcastle Diocesan Board of Social Responsibility, and set up with Manpower Services Commission funding, much goodwill and commitment, and a strong desire to meet the needs and wishes of local people. It is now in its fourth year. It helps local people to help themselves. Projects have included a photography scheme for the young unemployed, a one-parent family group, work with wayfarers, and an advice and information centre.

The advice shop is in Longbenton, a run-down area with high unemployment and few amenities. This project originated in the local Catholic Church. It informs and advises people who are out of work, about their rights and about their entitlements to unemployment and supplementary benefits. Appeals are sometimes made against the D.H.S.S., and claimants are helped with these, by the shop.

There are two gardening projects. Both are responses to requests from local people. One is aimed at pensioners and the unemployed. Two gardeners are employed to grow vegetables which are sold at cost price to local people. The response has been so great that it is hoped to extend the project. The second gardening scheme was set up by Intercare, but is run by the Heaton Community Group. A team of young people, recruited through the MSC's Youth Opportunities Programme, tidy gardens and do painting and decorating, for sick or disabled people.

A Project which involved young unemployed people was the Short Sharp Shock Drama Group. This ran for six months at St. Andrew's and helped to encourage young people to work together. Some members of the drama group got together to look for jobs, and indirectly found employment through attending the drama sessions.

Intercare has been an attempt by the Church to act in response to unemployment. Unemployed people have been recruited on one-year, non-renewable contracts, as is the case for any MSC Community Enterprise Programme. "Intercare is concerned always to be where God is - on the side of the poor, rooting first in action, then in comment, the images of love, commitment and redemption".

LINES TO FOLLOW

1) What to Do

a) What variety of teenagers' groups is there around you? Do you know of the Young Christian Workers? Find out about them and their Charter: A New Future for Young Workers (1979) from 106, Clapham Road, London, SW9 0JX., price 25p.

b) Which groups of young people seem most spirited and/or enterprising? Recent enthusiasm about campaigning for practical disarmament is most obvious among teenagers. Find our about "Second Generation", and other activities of Youth C.N.D., from 11, Goodwin Street, Finsbury Park, London N4, if there is not a local group.

2) What to Study

Bible

a Genesis 25: 19-34, a story of co-operation and division.

b Luke 2: 41-52, the methods of Jesus as a young man; and then of his pioneer Paul when regarding young people (Acts 20: 7-12).

N.B. At least 20 years of Jesus' early life passes without comment in our records.

c A small booklet of eight bible studies, called Christian Lifestyle Today, by Michael Fielding, is available from National Student Christian Congress, 40 Moat Lane, Birmingham, B5 5BD, price 35p.

Books

Nan Berger, Rights: A Handbook for People Under Age (Penguin, 1974)

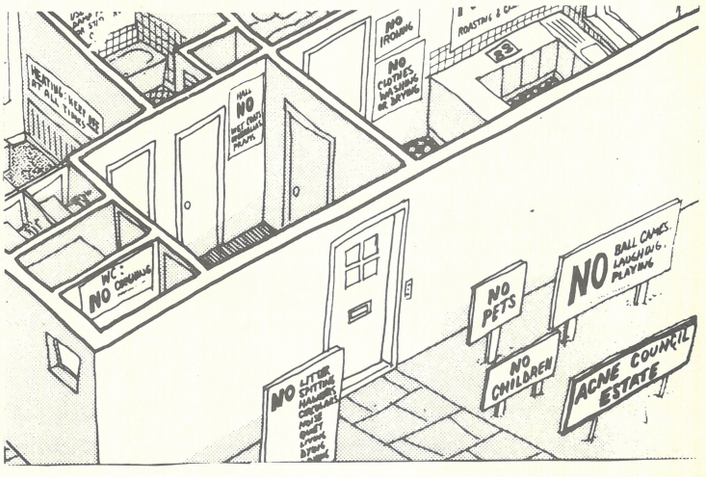
G. Mungham and G. Pearson (eds.), Working Class Youth Culture (R.K.P., 1976)

D. Robins and P. Cohen, Knuckle Sandwich, (Penguin, 1978)

F. Field, (ed.) Education and the Urban Crisis (R.K.P.., 1977)

3) What to Do Next

Find out what are the "gaps" in work now being done with teenagers where you live. In what ways can you, locally, respond to what you see? Can you encourage others to see the "gaps"? Can you work with others in action which creates your own "sign"?



5 Us and Them

STORY

I'd grown up in Cyprus Street; it was a good street. The poor people lived half a mile away, in what we used to call 'the Island', but Cyprus Street was not poor. Even in the thirties, half of the men had jobs. After the war, when I was growing up, there was plenty of work, and it was a good place to be.

In the late fifties and early sixties, people who had enough money moved out. Friends of mine at school left with their parents, and went to live in Romford or Hornchurch. We stayed; partly because my grandmother still lived in the next street with Len, my father's unmarried brother; partly because my dad always looked down on people who "get on and out".

"We've always lived in the Green. Why shouldn't we stay?" he said.

Then, in the late sixties, two things happened which he had not bargained for. First, the council demolished the whole of the Island. This meant that the people there moved into the next poorest area - which was Cyprus Street. Second, the people from the West Indies and Pakistan were brought to the city to fill vacant jobs. They had to find homes. As "the whites" moved out, the new immigrants moved in.

By now, dad had been made redundant, and mother had become much less mobile than she had been. They were trapped. One by one their children, like me, moved out to their own homes. Dad and mum could not move

Soon, the street began to look very different. The council bought three houses and put "problem families" in them. They, of course, denied that this was their policy, but it was obvious. Then Shelter bought five houses, and let them to very needy people. Finally, there were the people from Jamaica and Pakistan. Some were immaculate, thrifty, house-proud, bringing a bit of colour to the street. Some of them let things go. Two large houses at the corner of New Lane became used by prostitutes. Two other big houses were used as a home for battered wives.

When I got back to Bethnal Green, a man from the council came to visit us.

"A lot of the houses in this area lack some of the basic amenities", he said. "Some still only have outside toilets, have no running hot water, no bathroom, and attics without proper windows or insulation. So, we are going to make the area into a Housing Action Area. There will be money available to help people improve their homes."

"About time, too", my dad said.

"The first thing is that we have to come round and survey all the houses. Some of them will probably not be worth spending money on, and they will have to be replaced."

"Knocked down?" my dad asked.

"Yes, if necessary - but the people will be offered new houses on the street".

So, a few days later, another man from the council came and surveyed the house. Four weeks later, a letter came from the town hall. The house was not worth improving. It was scheduled for demolition.

Next day, we had a visitor. It was Mr. Akhtar. He was a local Pakistani who had been buying up houses in the area, modernising them, and selling them for a good profit.

"I have a nice home for sale on the corner," he said. "Or you can rent it from me, if you like. What do you think?"

"We'll have to talk it over with mother," my dad replied.

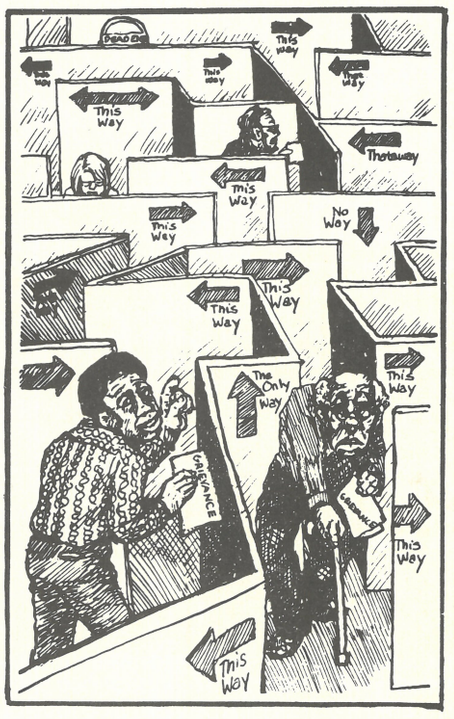
FACTS AND FIGURES

Many problems face people living in inner city or urban deprived areas. Take housing as an outstanding example.

Townsend reports that 13 million people in the U.K. live in houses with structural defects, 11 million in houses with inadequate facilities (lacking bath, indoor toilet, hot water, etc.), 10 million with an inadequate number of bedrooms, 22 million with heat in no more than one of their rooms and 4 million without internal play-space for their children. 61% of the U.K.'s population suffers from poor housing on one score, and 11% on three or more scores.

The higher the occupational class of people, the less likely they are, it was found, to suffer any kind of housing deprivation. And, conversely, "for those in poverty, housing facilities, heating, and indoor play-space for children were the respects in which they were relatively worst."

Also, the poor pay more for their housing! When account is taken of tax relief on mortgage interests, inflation and capital gains, "owner occupiers were paying less absolutely, as well as relative to income, than council tenants on their lifetime housing costs."



Perhaps the most difficult fact to face is that of powerlessness. Consider these facts about poor people:

1. If they have a grievance, they have few people who can understand it and put up a case about it.
2. If they are taken to court, they will be judged by middle class J.P.s, from middle class areas.
3. If they try to get into politics, they will have to do it on the terms of one of the big political parties, which are usually run from the suburbs.
4. If they have a problem about planning, they will have it decided by outside experts, again middle class people.
5. If they get ill, they do not get prompt attention, as there are no local doctors living in the area.
6. If they become injured or ill at work, they are likely to lose their jobs, as they are often the most vulnerable.
7. If they send their children to local schools, the pupils are likely to achieve less than if they were sent to schools in the suburbs.
8. If they buy a house, its value may deteriorate. If they rent local accommodation, they have the hassle of absentee landlords ignoring delapidations.
9. If they organise themselves into Action Groups, Tenants' Associations, or the like, all they can do is appeal or make themselves a nuisance - they may have little power actively to improve circumstances.
10. If they fall foul of the law, they often find that they are stigmatised because of the area they live in.

All of this adds up to one thing - powerlessness. If inner city people try to do anything - even in only one of these areas - they will soon discover that they are not the people who count, either in the eyes of 'those in power' or in processes of change.

SIGN

Inner City Pitsmoor, in Sheffield, had two Methodist churches. In the early Seventies, they united to form a new congregation which would build a complex of housing plus community and youth centre plus church, on the site of one of the churches.

The church members formed the Foundry Housing Association. The Housing Association bought four-fifths of the nearly-one-acre site from Burngreave Road Methodist Church, which was then able to build the Centre-cum-church with other money.

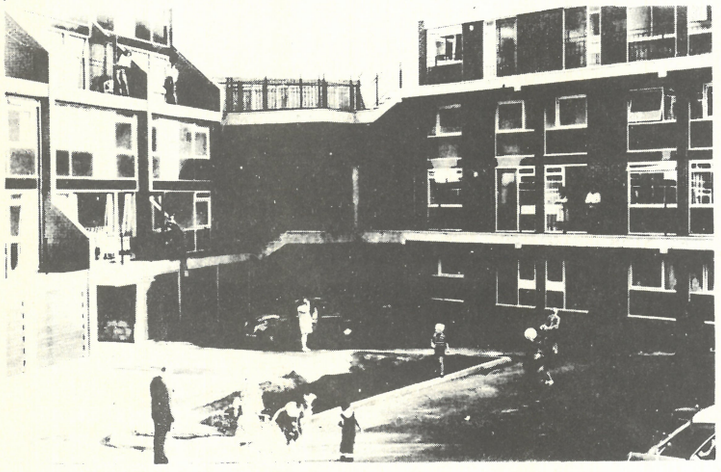
The finance worked out as follows:

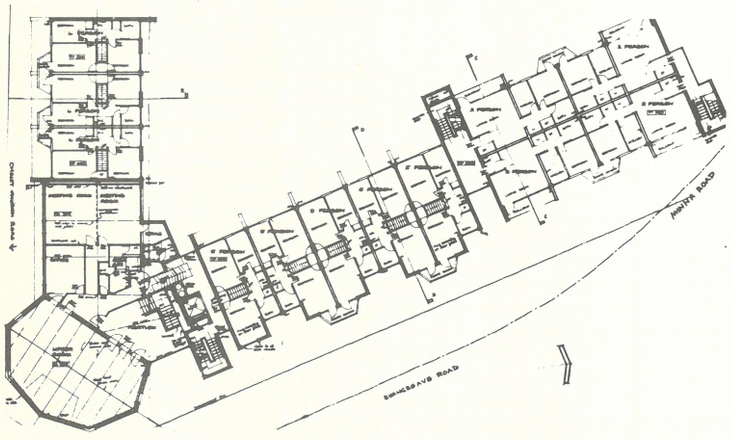
Sale of land to Foundry Housing Association	*£20,000*
Sale of Andover Street Methodist Church	*£ 9,500*
Local Education Authority & Government "Albermarle" Grant for Youth Centre	*£18,000*
Local Donations	*£ 7,000*
	£54,500

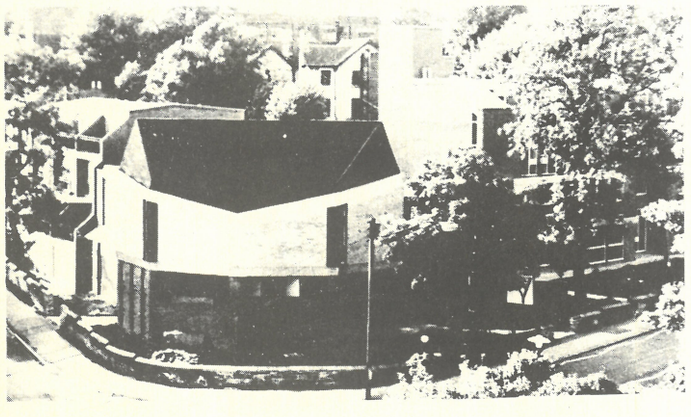
The Foundry Housing Association appointed a Committee of local members to decide who should live in the 31 varied units of housing for between 1 to 5 persons. The criteria agreed were:

"Those who by the diversity of their culture, and their capacity for leadership, would form a community of care and reconciliation in the midst of a community of need."

Since the flats were opened, a "mix" of locals and newcomers, social workers and steel workers, old people and newly marrieds, families and single people, have created a "mini cosmopolitan society". Other new housing has since been constructed in the area.







LINES TO FOLLOW

1) What to Do

a) Find out how your nearest local action group or tenants' association works. Visit a meeting. Study its reports and minutes. Don't waste its officers' time, but ask if you can be present when they are busy working.

b) Find out what work is being done with homeless people in your area. How might your group serve the homeless?

2) What to Study

Bible

Take Jesus and his disciples as a model to study how a group of people who have an intense sense of being "us", relate to other people, in outside authority, who are "them".

Some examples might be:

Mark Chapter 3; a series of "acted parables" or prophetic signs. These are designed to make people in authority (i) take account of a new happening, (ii) ask what its justification might be, (iii) see themselves as exposed by it.

a) List the actions of Jesus and the disciples.
b) List the justifications Jesus makes.
c) List the responses of the authorities.

Could there have been any way in which the authorities might have been won over?

For studies of Mark's Gospel related to Mission, Work, Community, Politics, etc., see Festival for the Future Church, by J.J. Vincent (Ashram Community, 1979. Available from UTU).

Books

Study how action groups work.

For example read chapters four and five of Inner City Issues, by R.B. Crowder and J.J. Vincent, and 'People Power', by Tony Gibson (Pelican, 1979).

Also useful for continual reference is:

Social Problems and the City - geographical perspectives, D.T. Herbert and D.M. Smith (1979).

3) What to Do Next

1 What needs doing in your town or city? Who could you find to help to form an action group?

2 Investigate who decides what needs doing in your city.

3 Find ways of influencing particular decisions and policies - concerning play-space, housing re-development, and public transport, for instance.

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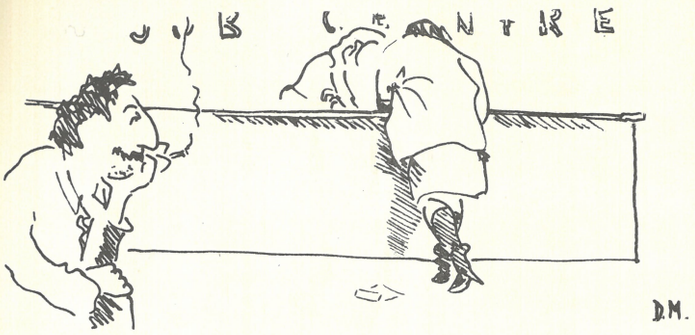
CAMBRIDGE

6 Work



STORY

The man three doors down, Frank Willmott, has been on the dole for two years. "Why don't you go and have a chat with him?" my dad suggested; so I did. "Well", said Frank, "the first big problem is that the planners have taken away all the small industries. Twenty years ago we had the printers on Old Bethnal Green Road, the two small engineering works on Globe Road, the scrap yard on Gawber Street, and the tailor's on Russia Lane. They were all pulled down when the District Plan was carried out ten years ago. So those jobs went.

"Also, there used to be part-time jobs you could get in the bigger works down Mile End way. But the dole makes it very difficult to do this. If you're on it, they don't like you doing anything else. On supplementary benefit, you can only earn four pounds a week before it is knocked off your benefit, so above four pounds a week you are no better off. And you have to convince them you are 'available for work'. What can you do on those terms?"

"So, there are part-time jobs?" I asked.

"Of course", he said, "A lot of people do jobs on the side, but the pay is lousy. A lot do jobs for nothing, just to keep themselves occupied. Les Brown, down the street, has mended several people's cars this winter, just to keep his hand in. It's better than standing around annoying the wife, or spending your money at the local."

"What kind of job do you think I could get?"

"You are what they call 'over-qualified', I think. If nobody wants your qualifications, you're at the bottom, but people distrust you, and think that a bottom job would be beneath you."

"So, what do you suggest I do?"

"Come to the works with me tomorrow, and we'll see what there is. I can't promise anything."

We went round some of the works. I was a new face, and a bit suspect. There were no jobs for me, with or without qualifications. At the Jobcentre, later, they suggested re-training, as a technical crafts teacher.

I got the papers, and it looked really interesting. I talked to Frank Willmott about it.

"A waste of time", he said. "I know many men who've done re-training courses and are still out of work."

I began to doubt if I'd ever find work. I had spent three months scouring the area and looking at job advertisements. I applied for jobs, but I only got one interview, and when I went I found that the closure of that firm had just been announced. Outside the area were a few strange developments in "skill sharing" on a "co-operative basis" for "small-scale durables".

One day Margaret had an idea. I'd just finished modifying our central heating. Why couldn't I earn some money installing central heating? She was sure there were people at church who were looking for someone reliable to do their heating for them. I could work from home, so there was no large capital cost. My engineering training and my work at British Steel gave me skills, and I still had some redundancy money left to act as a safety net.

However, the supply of work was tailing off. I had chosen a bad time to set up in business. Little house building was taking place, and there was little demand for my services.

Perhaps I don't just need alternative ways of earning money, but alternative ways of working and living. How do I share life with Margaret? Should I get alongside people, in inner city areas, acting out of different pressures in different ways? How do things like "community industries" fit together?

"We had better go and find out", Margaret and I agreed, after discussing it.

FACTS AND FIGURES

a) The estimated labour force in Great Britain is 26 million. Of this figure, 15.8 million are men, 6.7 million are married women and 3.5 million are unmarried women. In 1961, the total labour force was 23.8 million. The major increase in the labour force took place between 1961 and 1971.

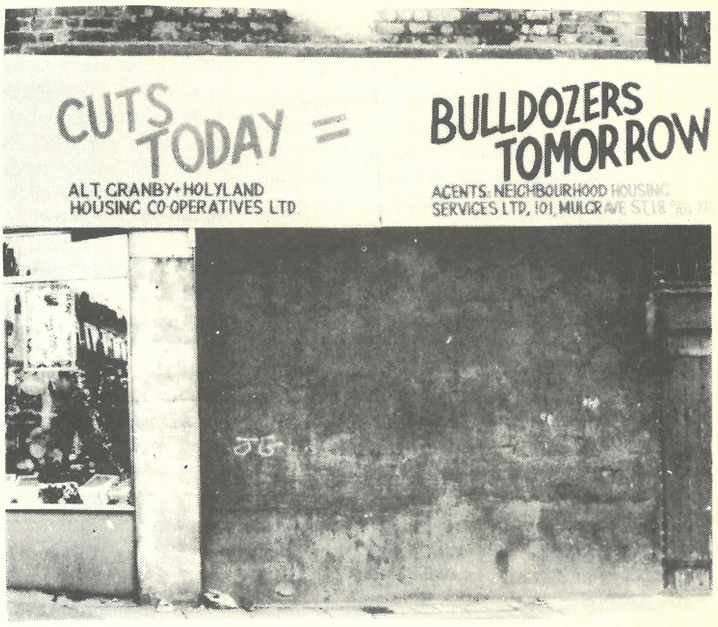
b) Throughout the 1970s, 83% of men aged 16-64 were employed and 9% were self-employed. 60% of married women aged 16-59 were employed/self employed in 1979 - 10% more than in the early 1970s. 70% of married women were in work in 1979 and 12% were full-time students.

c) Two million fewer men were employed in manufacturing industry in 1979 than in 1961. This number has increased dramatically since 1979. Half a million more men had jobs in the service industries in 1979 than in 1961.

Three-quarters of a million fewer women worked in manufacturing industry in 1979 than in 1961; two and a quarter million more worked in service industry. Compared with 1971, 900,000 more women had part-time jobs in 1979. Most of these were married women with dependent children.

There were four million part-time workers in service industries in 1977.

d) In 1979, 11% of male employees changed employers; 13% of women did so.

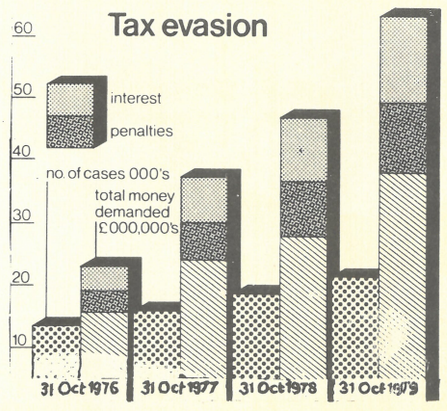


The number of people unemployed in 1971 was 792,000. By 1976, it was 1,359,000. In early 1981, it was 2,400,000; in addition, the Department of Employment estimated that some 300,000 unemployed had not registered. Many of these appeared to be married women.

25% of the registered unemployed have been out of work for at least a year. The largest number of unemployed men are in the 20-24 age group. In July 1980, 296,000 school leavers were registered as unemployed - 80,000 more than a year previously.

e) In March, 1980, 405,000 were involved in government special employment and training measures. They included 159,000 in the Temporary Short Time Working Compensation Scheme, 95,000 in the Youth Opportunities Programme (216,000 had entered this scheme from April, 1979), 61,000 in the Job Release scheme, 43,000 in the Small Firms Employment Subsidy. The cost of employment and training schemes in 1980-81 is over £1,400 million.

f) Of those males who have had one spell of unemployment in the past year, 15% are semi-skilled or unskilled manual workers; 8% are skilled manual workers. An unskilled or semi-skilled worker is three times more likely to be unemployed than a non-manual worker, and more than one in four in this group is now unemployed. The total cost of social security benefits in 1980-81 (including contributory benefits) will exceed twenty thousand million pounds. In 1977 an estimated £340 million was unclaimed by about 1,030,000 people.



SIGN

Teeside Wastechaser

The project started in December, 1976.

Aims

1) To provide jobs for young people who would have particular difficulty in finding and holding employment.

2) To promote awareness among Teeside people of the importance of conservation and recycling.

3) To provide funds for the "Third World".

The Project

Wastechaser collects waste paper, used clothing and aluminium foil from about 20,000 households on Teesside. It has three vans. The paper is collected every four weeks from householders and delivered to the depot - an old school in Middlesbrough - where it is sorted into three grades (cardboard, waste paper and newspaper) and sent to a paper merchant in skips. The used clothing is sent to Oxfam Wastesaver in Huddersfield, in loads of 3 tons. Aluminium foil and drinks cans are sold to a local scrap dealer.

Wastechaser also buys paper and used clothing from voluntary organisations and schools. Recycled duplicating paper is retailed from the depot.

Finance

Wastechaser is a project-based Youth Opportunities Programme scheme, financed by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC). MSC pay all the young people an allowance. Adult staff are paid at the rate for the job by MSC, who also provide assistance with other costs, although Wastechaser meets most of the running costs from sales of materials.

Staff

1 manager; 1 yard foreman/driver; 2 drivers; 1 clerk/typist; 13 collectors/sorter. Collectors/sorters are sent by the careers office; most have low educational attainment, some live in a local authority hostel and some are ex-offenders.

Training:

Manager - attending a Management course at a F.E. college. Clerk/typist - attending a shorthand course at a F.E. college. Collectors/sorters - attending a life/social skills course at a F.E. college.

Future Employment

Wastechaser has been asked by British Steel Corporation to recommend suitable employees for interview for manual jobs in local steelworks.

Management

Wastechaser is the trading name of Cownpran Ltd., an "off the peg" limited company. The formation of the company was legally required. The company must provide an annual report and annual accounts and is liable to pay taxes like any other private company. Directors together spend some 20 hours per week on Wastechaser business.

Achievements

By September, 1979, Wastechaser had:

1) collected over 100 tons of paper in a month for the first time;

2) collected over 50 tons of used clothing;

3) collected about 5 tons of aluminium foil, mostly in milk bottle tops;

4) saved Cleveland ratepayers £18,000 (it costs £9 per ton to incinerate paper as domestic refuse);

5) provided work for young people who would have had difficulty finding any employment.

Problems

1) Capital - MSC would not help with the purchase of capital items. All the vans have been bought from the profits. In the early months, a van had to be hired, which was expensive. All the vans are old and prone to breakdowns.

2) Conflict - between commercial and social aims. If Wastechaser were a purely commercial venture the company would not employ as many staff. Although there is a hard core of very reliable workers, there is a high turnover of people who are unable to work steadily over a period. (Eventually they leave; we do not dismiss them.)

LINES TO FOLLOW

1) What to Do

a) Find someone who has been on supplementary benefit. Ask how much money the claimant got, what the claiming procedure is, what difference to the claimant's spending is made by having income reduced to supplementary benefit level. Ask whether or not it was worth claiming.

b) Find a young person who has been unemployed and has been through job training schemes. How does the person feel about those experiences? How does the person view her or himself? What are the person's hopes?

2) What to Study

Bible

Read Genesis 1 and 2. Make a note as you do so of everything it says about work.

First, God works. He makes the Earth, and rests after six days hard labour (Gen. 1:1-2:3)

Second, Adam and Eve get the Garden of Eden to "enjoy" in one account (Gen. 2: 10-15). In another account, they get created things to "subdue"(Gen. 1: 26-30).

Third, the 'fruit' of knowing good and evil - that is, being able to decide what to do and what not to do (Gen. 2: 16-25).

Fourth, the punishment of Adam is that he will have to work hard "by the sweat of his brow"(Gen. 3: 17-19).

Books

Sheila Lewenhak, Women and Work, (Fontana, 1980)

Sarah Cox and Robert Golden, Down the Road: Unemployment and the Right to Work (Readers and Writers Publishing Co-operative, 1977).

Ashram Community Trust, Working Together, (ACT 20, May 1980)

3) What to Do Next

a) Find out if your church, or some of its members, could set up a community enterprise scheme under the Manpower Services Commission's Community Enterprise Programme, or the Youth Opportunities Programme. Get information on these programmes from your local M.S.C. office.

b) Community Service Volunteers places volunteers in a variety of jobs throughout the country. Young people work for up to a year, accommodation and subsistence being provided for them. Do you know of a group of people who could employ Community Service Volunteers?

The regional figures and percentages for April were as follows (with the January figures in brackets). The April total was 2,518,00.

unemployed

	'000's	%	
S.E. England	548.1	7.2	(7.0)
E. Anglia	62.0	8.6	(8.4)
S.W. England	156.5	9.4	(9.3)
W. Midlands	286.3	12.3	(11.7)
E. Midlands	152.6	9.5	(9.2)
Yorks/Humberside	232.6	11.0	(10.8)
N.W. England	357.4	12.5	(12.3)
Northern England	188.7	13.6	(13.6)
Wales	147.2	13.6	(13.5)
Scotland	287.7	12.7	(12.7)
N. Ireland	98.9	17.2	(17.3)

Grim news for the inner city

THE newly-announced rate support grant proposals which will cut Government aid to some London boroughs by twelve and a half per cent spell grim news for the inner city, said the Secretary of Methodist's London Mission, the Rev Jeffrey Harris.

Mr Harris, who is also secretary of the Church's inner city committee said: 'I hope the Environment Secretary's claim that the proposals have been weighted to take account of special need can be justified.' If not, he warned, deteriorating social conditions would cause great unrest.

'Tax cuts to the rich only increase the frustration of this latter group and the new RSG proposals increase the impression that Britain still consists of two nations which are being driven further apart by the present Government's policies.'

Mr Harris drew attention to the fact that in London:

- 250,000 houses were classed as unfit for habitation.
- 250,000 families shared toilet or cooking facilites.
- As increasing unemployment particularly affected the under twenty-fives, membership of extreme movements of right and left was growing.
- Many young people, especially young blacks, failed to register for employment because they believed they had no prospects. Some resorted to petty crime to keep a roof over their heads.
- Across the country 10,000,000 people lived at the level of supplementary benefit or within twenty per cent of it. Many of these people were concentrated in the inner cities.

METHODIST RECORDER

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 1981

Two nations: Two Churches?

John Vincent

EVERY Spring, I take a "State of the Mission" Address around the churches of the Ecumenical Inner City Mission in which I work.

Sheffield, like many English cities, has its divide between East and West. Our Brandenburg Gate (the Wicker Arch) admits you to the Other City: Industry, dereliction, immigrants, surviving old folk, ne'er do wells, one-parent families. In its midst, we sing old hymns, stage marches, buy houses, call out suburbanites, discover histories, sit at the feet of the poor, set up alternative stables, parabolise incarnation.

It's not a bad vantage point from which to ask: What is happening in the Church?

The National Initiative for Evangelism is actually advocating extra-denominational house churches. Three world consultations on Evangelism (WCC, and two evangelical ones) are belatedly persuading Western missionary executives to majority-world theologies. The new Christian Organisations for Social, Political and Economic Change is rallying the leftist faithful. A new Archbishop at least admits he does not know what to do. A few Churchmen help CND, War on Want, and CPAG. And a few ecumenical and denominational leaders adopt vows of silence on major issues, which at least is better than empty claptrap from disincarnate boffins. Is the Church at the top changing?

But what is really happening to the Church, the Church at the bottom? One thing for sure. It has got harder, materially, for churches among the poor to survive. But also, it gets harder, spiritually, for rich churches to survive. Even the establishment give at least verbal assent to the ecumenical dogma of the moment: God is on the side of the poor, the oppressed, the disadvantaged.

And, week after week, the churches of the rich solemnly proclaim the scandalous, odd, unnerving stories of a Galilean peasant seeking out the deadlegs of society and forming an alternative community of drop-out preaching subversives. A time bomb for the poor, across the great divide, worshipped weekly by bank managers, headmasters and senior social workers.

Each year, I visit perhaps ten universities to speak. Four years ago, I started talking about Christianity as Alternative Journeys — journey backwards, to discover new roots; journey sideways, to discover different places to be; journey downwards, to discover the poor. I was greeted with fairly steady ridicule. Recently, it's been different. The prospect of unemployment, the manifest failure of technocracy, the wounding of little people, the appearance of blatant power, the cruelty and inhumanity of wealth and finance, the viciousness of law and order, the crudity and pride of politics — all have produced another great divide.

Out of holes in campus grounds emerge a few now who not only do not get on the gravy trains, but who footslog to find places to pioneer new being. This spring and summer we have dozens of people coming for "Creating Alternatives" weekends to seek out new futures.

The growing division in society and Church at least means we see what is for what is. The subtle self-deceptions and convenient mutuality games of the Seventies are finally exposed. The group dynamics movement, the communities movement (they had a congress in September), the cool hymns, the cooing charismatic prayer cells look funny and self-indulgent now. Even campaigns on the three great dividers of today — sex, class and race — now themselves divide on the basis of possession and non-possession of homes and jobs.

Those with jobs, though female, working class or black, are now the privileged. Those without jobs can be male, middle class and white, but they are the new outsiders, the new poor, the new disadvantaged. With compassionate inconstancy, God seeks out his new favourites.

The Church, which never caught up with his last moves, perceptibly gives up, retires into numbed prayers that the nation when we all had it good might come back.

For long, churches have felt their great contribution was reconciliation. Christians were the ones who could bring together women and men, working class and middle class, black and white. But in actual fact, that is not what happened at all.

Over the past five or ten years, each separate group has raided the Christian storehouse and made off with appropriate goodies. Not reconciliation but empowerment, not unity but division, not oneness but separateness, is the first gift of the good news — that each person in his/her own community and history is uniquely possessed of some secret of the Kingdom, and uniquely entitled to the unfulfillable presumption that he/she can build a bit of it.

What is now the agenda is the awesome and bitter prospect that the two nations of rich and poor will have to go it alone, into their own dark nights of the soul, to discover for themselves through abandonment, isolation, and mutual separation what ways, supports, and communities might be within Christian faith. The recession, the micro-chip polarisation, the poverty gulf, ensure that two nations grow. **Hopefully, the second nation will also have a second Church.**

METHODIST RECORDER

THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 1981

Two Nations One Gospel ?

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